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THE CHURCH AND DIVORCE.

HENRY C. CORRANCE.

THERE is an universal ideal element interwoven with the history of the race and individual and underlying all human affairs and institutions, which rises by gradual stages from subjection to the merely material and determined till it issues in freedom, in self-determination. Its development is most conspicuous on the intellectual side, but mere intellectualism, without a higher principle, tends to revert to the service of the mechanical.

Freedom depends ultimately upon an ideal aim, which seeks self-realisation, and is summed up in the notion of "the Best." That aim manifests itself as the secular striving of life to rise superior to its surroundings, to raise itself to a higher plane, of which the final stage is the effort of man to gain freedom of development for his higher nature. There is, then, throughout the whole of life, and especially in man, an unceasing conflict between the ideal and the actual, which asserts itself most strongly in the most fundamental relations—the sexual. It was as a means of regulating these relations that the institution of marriage originated. It was a necessary outgrowth of social life and, therefore, largely conditioned by material forces. But from the beginning it could not be the mere resultant of those forces; it was bound to share the higher and more spiritual aspect of universal life. In its early stages the utilitarian and sensual elements predominated. In the struggle for existence material aims necessarily preponderated over the purely intellectual. The latter were mainly the ministers of the former and their development was due to the pressure of bodily needs. The savage woman sought a husband who was strong and cunning enough to win support for herself and her children in the struggle with nature and his fellow-man. He sought a wife who could best keep the home and aid him by the

manufacture of household goods and even weapons of the chase. The utilitarian basis of marriage can never be entirely eliminated, though its form alters with changing needs and conditions. But even in the savage state, and much lower down the scale of life—among the animals inferior to man—the ideal element is present. So long as the union is merely a selfish *liaison*, in which each values the other only as ministering to personal wants, it is obvious that the higher element is lacking. When each considers the other as much as, if not more than, self, even to the extent of mutual self-sacrifice, a great advance has been made.

The ideal or free element which breaks the bonds of individualism has been so far victorious. It is foreshadowed in the love of mate and offspring, in the frequent self-sacrifice for the latter, which is seen among many kinds of animals, and in the life-long attachment of some monogamous species. But here the ideal is only adumbrated, for it lacks the self-conscious purpose which is found in man alone. It does, however, indicate the lines on which the spiritual element in sexual relations must manifest itself. It might seem, indeed, as if nothing could be more opposed to freedom than monogamy as a strict, undeviating rule, and doubtless this is true if it is a mere rule. To be really free such a union must be willing. And there lies the crux, for, on the other hand, "free love" could only introduce chaos into the sexual as all other human relations. And mankind has long ago decided, both on social and other grounds, that this is impossible. Whether in the form of promiscuity or temporary *liaisons*, no ideal relations could be so established between individuals.

Of the settled forms of the institution, the great rival of monogamy, both in the animal and human world, is polygamy. Others, such as polyandry, are hardly to be considered, since the objections to the one, from an ideal standpoint, have, with certain modifications, equal force against the other. From the utilitarian standpoint it might be urged that the different forms of the institution,

being adapted to different races, are therefore the best for them. From this point of view polygamy, polyandry and even some forms of sexual communism, are justified in the countries in which they prevail. They are the outgrowth, as is monogamy, of all those conditions which have given the particular race its present form; they represent the reciprocal action and reaction of all its laws and institutions over a long past, with which, therefore, they are co-ordinated and inter-related in such a way that they could not be fundamentally altered without a complete social revolution; they represent one aspect of its whole religious, intellectual, moral and social attainment. Therefore, they, with all other institutions, have no absolute value, but one which is strictly relative to the general conditions of the race. The argument, so stated is unexceptionable, in fact almost a truism, but does not touch the real question involved in the idea of general progress, viz.: What existing form of the institution represents its higher stage? To the assumption of a static absolute, true for all times and places, it gives an answer that cannot be gainsaid, but does not affect the idea of an immanent absolute which is progressive in its manifestation. The argument certainly holds good against revolutionary changes in the institutions of a people not prepared for their reception. Such an uprooting of their social habits would do more harm than good. If it is not the result of their own self-determination, it could only be superficial, and would bring in more evils than it removed. But, apart from this purely negative and relative argument, which reduces all forms of marriage to the same level, it must be admitted that there is some force in the positive contention that monogamous countries are subject to evils from which polygamous are almost entirely free. In countries where polygamy prevails the so-called "social evil," which is such a blot upon European civilisation, is alleged to be practically non-existent. On the other hand, the strength of this argument is largely discounted by the presence of other evils, such as the prevalence of non-

natural vice, the degradation attendant upon forced concubinage and the consequent lowered position of women. Nor can it be contended that this form of the institution is useful in producing a better race, either physically or mentally. On the contrary, there is much that points in the opposite direction. The races among which it prevails are the most stationary and backward, are lacking in all progressive elements and are even distinctly retrograde. This is precisely what would be expected of a system which makes it impossible that a father should take the same interest in the mental and moral training of his too numerous offspring as in the smaller families of the West, while the mothers are kept in such a state of subjection and ignorance that they would not be fitted for the task. This form of the institution, then, is not even the best for fulfilling the utilitarian ideal of providing good citizens for the state. In fact, the ideal contained in polygamy is simply and purely sensual and is set before the faithful as their ultimate aim and goal in the Paradise of Mahomed. What may be called the barnyard argument, is the only one of any weight and makes its appeal entirely to the lower nature of man, to the brute instincts which he shares with inferior animals.

Polygamy, then, is calculated to promote neither the utilitarian nor the higher ideal. The latter has been confined to monogamous institutions and has grown up with them, for such a union between two individuals implies no mere soulless civil contract, but that union of heart and mind which this form of the institution alone renders possible. That it is seldom, or inadequately, realized affords no justification for ignoring the higher element. To treat it with the cold calculation of utilitarianism is impossible for living beings of complex spiritual nature. And, however much it may be left out of account, it is sure to revenge itself sooner or later. *Mariages de convenance* are proverbially unhappy.

Two prevailing conservative views of the marriage bond are those of the man of the world and the Church. That

of the former varies with different individuals, but, on the whole, it inclines to the purely formal and conventional; at least in its expectation from others. He regards it in the first place as a matter of rule and custom, to which external conduct must strictly conform, whatever private relaxations may be sought. Marriage is, in the view of many of his class at any rate, mainly a matter of social convention, though this does not preclude his personal relations with the lady of his choice from yielding moderate satisfaction. In his general view, however, this element is not only subordinate to the other, but is not even essential. It is very good in its way, because it helps to make matters easier and pleasanter, but there are other considerations of far greater importance, such as money and social position. If inner harmony is lacking, the correct course of conduct for a married couple is, by a mutual understanding, to face the world together smiling, while going their several ways in private. From this point of view there is no need for reform in the marriage laws. Individual interests must be sacrificed to the good of society. This last proposition contains a general truth, but those who maintain it are apt to forget that society is an abstraction, that it is composed of individuals, and that the plea for society against the individual can only be maintained when the individuals concerned remain a small minority. When they form a large, increasing and discontented minority, the restrictions and disabilities, under which they labour, become a peril to the state instead of a protection. In fact, the situation cannot be better summed up than in adapting the words of one, whose winged rebukes to the sticklers for convention of his age have come down to us through the centuries: Institutions were made for man, not man for institutions. Man has made them, Man can unmake, reform, adapt them to his own needs and purposes. But there is one element which he can hinder and pervert, but not destroy, the ideal of freedom and betterment which is within, but yet superior to, him.

Every law and institution made or founded in the past

has been either abolished, or else amended from time to time to meet the changing circumstances and conditions of humanity. Nothing human has been free from this law of change, and can marriage be exempt? "Yes," say the men of the world, on utilitarian grounds, or, more often, on grounds of pure inertia, "leave it alone. It is true the edifice is fairly rotten in some respects, but that is the very reason for not touching it. If you do so, it will fall to pieces and great will be the fall thereof. Besides, it is a question of considerable complexity, delicacy and difficulty to adjust exactly the conflicting interests of society and the individual, of one sex and the other. We are not blind to the defects of the present system, but the difficulties of reform are very great. Therefore, let us leave it alone!" The argument is strong in its appeal to spiritual sloth. The difficulty must be shirked; it is easier to proceed on the lines of least resistance. The man of the world does not see the need of reform because he does not explicitly admit the ideal. To do this would require more thought than he is able or willing to give to the subject. So far as he admits it, he places it in a subordinate position. He frankly prides himself upon his "practical" view. And the practical view is, in some respects, a very necessary one. There are plenty of foolish young people who imagine themselves to have mutually conceived a love which will be life-long; only to find, after they have been married a month, that they have made the mistake of their lives. Then, what plea of love can justify a man in marrying before he can adequately support his wife or provide for the education of children? Such "love" is no more than veiled selfishness, which will reveal its true nature later on. It is under such circumstances that the cold-water douche administered by the practical, common sense of the worldly-wise father is invaluable, and has probably saved many an unhappy union. But the practical attitude, in most cases, embraces the assumption that, as young men cannot marry early, they must "sow their wild oats." In other words, the "social evil," with all its hideous and repulsive

consequences, is taken to be part of the necessary order of society, as is also the custom of temporary *liaisons*, with its unequal, and sometimes cruel, treatment of the woman and children, which compares ill with the justice and humanity of early Jewish polygamy,¹ or even with that of the Turk.

Totally opposed to this attitude in some of its fundamental assumptions, while agreeing with its main conclusion against reform, is that of the Church. The basal difference between the two views consists in the Church's unswerving maintenance of the ideal as essential to the institution and to sexual relations in general. What the world passes by with a shrug of the shoulders the Church, following the plain teaching of the New Testament, and especially of Paul, brands deadly sin. The man of the world advocates self-restraint only so far as is necessary for social appearances and efficiency. The Church does so from ideal motives. She says in effect: "It is not only your friends, your social position, your health or work which are to be considered, but your spiritual development, which can only be promoted by seeking to subdue the natural instincts which you have in common with the lower animals." But the Church is dealing with a very different issue, which nevertheless she endeavours to confuse with the above, when she goes on to insist that, when once the marriage ceremony has been performed, the union is absolute, there is no place for divorce. The reason of this is that, for her, the marriage law is part of her moral dogma, which, like her metaphysical dogma, is as "the law of the Medes and Persians that altereth not." The authority for it rests on Christ's reported saying, as interpreted by the *Western Church*, the *Eastern* differing in an important particular. In spite of this radical difference, Absolutists, both Catholic and Anglican, declare that the marriage-bond is inviolable. The latter are more absolutists than the former, as throughout the whole range of dogma; and

¹ Exodus 21: 10.

with less reason, seeing that their Church does not, as a whole, endorse their views and that they allow the Greek Church co-ordinate authority with their own while the Catholic Church regards both as schismatic. They pretend that to relax the bond, to alter its conditions by ever so little, would be a breach of God's ordinance, and destroy the foundations of religion and morality. It is true that the Catholic Church, in practice though not in theory, less absolutist than High Anglicanism, recognises that there are certain circumstances under which a divorce may be allowed, though it is seldom granted and then only on alleged grounds of nullity.

Thus, while differing so widely in principle, the conservative views of the man of the world and of the Church are both agreed in uncompromising opposition to reform.

Neither of these views tends to promote the ideal. While the man of the world frankly disregards it, the Church, in theory at least and mostly in practice, maintains a strict and unbending attitude, which obliges men and women to remain in marital bondage after their complete incompatibility has long been proved. And this spiritual tyranny can only be maintained by the support of the man of the world, whose leading motives are very different. The ideal fares badly in either case, both at the hands of those who would imprison it in the bonds of unyielding dogma and those who would ignore it and substitute social convention.

Over against these two typical attitudes, so opposed in principle, so united in consequences, is set that of the free mind in quest of truth, which recognises the ideal alone as absolute, and as never yet realised in any moral dogma or convention. It recognises, in fact, that the ideal has a history, dating back to prehistoric and even pre-human ages. Some form of monogamy, together with the ideal involved in it, is far older than Christ, and his reported saying concerning it could not be complete or final. It is idealistic and general, and assent could be yielded to the inseparability of those whom "God hath joined together" without allowing that this could apply to the large majority

of marriages. The Church has embroidered it with legal details and ceremonial trappings in order to meet the circumstances through which she has passed. Everything in this world changes, and it is the task of the philosopher, while recognising this truth, to endeavour so to affect the course of thought that this change may serve the twofold yet single purpose of promoting the ideal and human welfare. For, from the ideal standpoint, the two aims are one. Utilitarianism, like Materialism, is only at fault when it denies the supremacy of Idealism. And the standpoint of the latter, as we have seen, agrees with that of the Church in so far as it represents the very opposite of the "barnyard" theory, or Mahomedan Paradise, of Polygamy. It cannot, indeed, escape the physical relations implied in marriage, which are so prominent in the passage from Genesis adopted by Christ. The Church's ideal of virginity is a separate, though closely related, subject, which is not now to be considered. For the question at issue is not that of individual perfecting, but the secular and racial advancement of the ideal. It does not concern a doctrine, which, if universally followed, would destroy the race; but the most fundamental aspect of the strange dualism of universal life, the conflict between the ideal and the actual; not that simplification of it which would cut the Gordian knot. It concerns the ever pressing problem of the reconciliation of the ideal with the conditions of its origin and development, to which, in their baser aspect, it is utterly opposed. The Catholic Church recognises the one question as complementary to the other; it is only in Buddhism that the stricter theory is made absolute. The ideal, in monogamy, takes human facts as they are and seeks to elevate them to a higher plane; its aim is to spiritualise the primitive sexual relationship. One side of it, then, necessarily implies inhibition, restriction, restraint. The couple should be faithful to each other and their union should be life-long. To secure this it must be founded on something far higher than mere physical relations, however necessary these may be. They

cannot be eliminated, but must sink back into their due proportion to intellectual, affective, moral and social qualities, and that compatibility of disposition which is essential.

The Church's doctrine is at one with this ideal in its rejection of all soulless *liaisons*. The difference arises in her insistence on its mere formal embodiment which hinders its manifestation and evolution.

There probably always have been, as no doubt there are now, many examples of wedded life in which some approximation has been made to it. But, on the whole, Christian history seems one record of its failure; a failure, it is true, which is not confined to the sexual, but extends to all those human relations which Christ's teaching sought to uplift and spiritualise.

We are, however, here concerned with one aspect only of this general question, and rather with the present and the future than with the past. No one can maintain, with any semblance of truth, that the state of things is satisfactory at the present time. And has the Church, as the great upholder of the ideal, done all that is possible for its furtherance? It is not enough to lay the blame on human nature, to preach sermons, to hear confessions, to play the rôle of physician of souls, if such an office degenerates into the mere recognition and treatment of a chronic disease, if no effort is made to better the conditions, to make the higher life possible of attainment. Such an attitude is only too common and well harmonises with the doctrine of an external pardon, whether sacramental or mystical, and that insistence on the letter of the law which negates the spirituality and inwardness of Christianity. Mere legal proscriptions and prohibitions have little effect on the inner life, though they may secure an external, and often hypocritical recognition. Punctiliousness as to form and inward license are frequently associated. The vanished order of social life which "called a spade a spade" was not really worse than ours. The only way to lead man upwards is to give him high aims and objects which

may absorb the lower, to turn his superfluous energies into healthy channels.

These general observations apply to marriage. As "the cowl does not make the monk," so no dogmatic and legal rigidity can make two people live happily together, if their natures are utterly unsuited. It is not always possible to peep behind the scenes, and, when the curtain is lifted, there is often but a partial and temporary glimpse. Therefore, it is impossible to say, with any degree of exactness, to what extent the institution has been a failure. But those, who have lived long in the world and have had some experience of life, are aware that very many marriages are only external, even when it is considered necessary for social reasons to keep up appearances. And, in any case, it is generally acknowledged that marriage, as an institution, does not apparently attain even that measure of success which it seemed to have in the past, when the choice was made by the parent without reference to his daughter's wishes, on grounds mainly social and financial.

Perhaps it was owing to this very system that the measure of success was greater, since it implied a social order in which the position of women was strictly defined, instead of being, as now, in an unsettled, because transitional, state. In the old days, monogamy, like polygamy, was simplified by the complete subjection of the wife to the will of her husband, which was maintained by the whole force of religious and social opinion. Even corporal chastisement was allowed. Such subjection, in fact, has always been the teaching of Christianity, as is seen in the New Testament and in the marriage service. But, in England and America, at least, the gradual emancipation of woman has to be recognised as a fact of increasing importance, and woman's assertion of her right as a reasoning being to form her own judgments and be responsible for her own actions has made a modification of her position inevitable. This is partly due to the more liberal education of women, which widens and stimulates their minds, causing them to seek occupations by which they may attain independence,

and when once the sweets of liberty have been tasted, the girl is very different from one who never left her home or parents' authority until she was handed over to that of her husband.

Not only this, but the whole mental atmosphere has changed; it is in many respects much freer and, therefore, more full of hope, though also of danger, for freedom is the only soil in which the ideal can flourish. Life is not so simple as it was; fresh interests have arisen, vaster horizons have dawned which have encouraged the growth of free spirits. It is owing to these causes that the more or less "educated classes" are the most affected in this respect. "The masses" live a more primitive life, where wants and interests are mainly material and, therefore, common. The education of "the classes" may in some respects be superficial, their thinking shallow and unoriginal, yet they pick up more quickly than the others the modern ideas which are in the air, even if they pervert and distort them, while they have not the common material interests which keep the others together.

It is impossible, even if it were desirable, to turn the hands of the clock back and alter this state of things, and though the clergy continue to teach the subjection of women on Pauline lines, that teaching is losing its effect. Yet without such subjection how is the institution to be maintained unreformed? It has been said that it is easier to make two watches keep time together than for two human beings to remain long in agreement. If marriage harmony was rare when difficulties were smoothed by the submission of one mind to the other, the independence of the modern woman will make it rarer still. Aims, tastes, sentiments, mental and moral dispositions vary with each individual, and, however careful the mutual choice may be, it is often not till the common daily life reveals them that differences become prominent. As the principle of subjection is breaking down, nothing remains as the bond of union but the most potent unifying element—love. In those rare cases where dispositions are nearly in accord,

the task of love is easy, but with the first clash of will or judgment its trial begins, and it need be strongly rooted and of genuine quality to survive. It must be aided by common sense, by the will to accommodate, but without mutual love there can be no real and lasting union.

It is not surprising, then, that there is an increase of late years in the number of divorces and separations, judicial and otherwise. It is not surprising that marriages are fewer and later, for men and women have learnt to realise more fully the immense difficulties of the wedded life, and the Church's refusal to sanction any further relaxations in the marriage laws is, to a great extent, responsible for the disfavour into which the institution has fallen.

Yet it is not evil in itself. In some form or other, as has been already pointed out, such an institution is necessary to social life. Civilised races could not leave unregulated so fundamental a relation; while, as regards the ideal, it has been seen that monogamy is the only form which, however imperfectly, embodies it. It is partly because they realise this and partly owing to sheer traditionalism that the clergy, as a body, are so opposed to any reform. But it is a short-sighted policy on their part, for, in seeking to keep the institution unmodified, they will end by destroying it; no lesson from the past being clearer than that all institutions must change if they are to survive under changed conditions.

But though they may destroy the institution, the ideal remains indestructible, for it exists free and independent in the moral intuitions of the community and will assert itself outside the institution until this last is remodelled by the force of public opinion.

Seeing the great risks of matrimony, as at present ordered, an increasing number of enlightened members of both sexes may be willing to brave social ostracism by living together, and only when they have proved their mutual compatibility will they seek, if possible, to legalise the union on account of the social disabilities involved in its neglect. For, let it be plainly understood, the ideal

does not depend upon the institution, but the institution on the ideal. Men or women, who, through no fault of their own but force of circumstances, have found themselves unequally yoked, and who, again through no fault of their own, are unable to dissolve the legal bonds, take to themselves another partner. If theirs is a marriage of heart and soul, if they remain true and constant, they so far fulfil the ideal which they found impossible of fulfilment under the legal conditions. Such is the attitude which the uncompromising opposition of an influential section of the clergy to all reform is contributing to create in many minds. The clerics have their stronghold in their apparent maintenance of the ideal, in the conservative attitude of many men of the world, in the fact that society demands some institution and that women's rights would not be safe without it owing to the selfishness of men, but at least it is evident that they are wrong in identifying the ideal with the institution itself, or in attaching a moral stigma to what may be called informal wedlock. Nor do they help their case by accusing those who live together outside the marital bond of yielding to the lower passions. This is the case with those irregular and temporary connections which are often the accompaniment of an unhappy marriage, but a man and woman living faithfully together and bringing up their children properly can afford to despise such aspersions. Their disability is simply a legal and external one, owing to the state of human law which is supported by the clergy. Moral reforms are originated by the action of the higher, not the lower, nature, and their appeal is made to reason, justice and truth. No alteration of the law can of itself directly promote the growth of this ideal element, but the state of the law can and does hinder its development. It is a truism that law cannot alter human nature. Moral and intellectual training alone can do this. Religion is still a power in the land. It is still, as it has been called—"the metaphysic of the many." Unfortunately the Church hinders, almost as much as she furthers, the real work of religion by identifying it with irrationality

and dogma. This is bad enough in the case of matters speculative and historical, but far worse in the region of morals and conduct, which more intimately concern life and action.

That only the men and women best suited to each other should be united in matrimony is a practical ideal both for the state and the individual. It is best from a utilitarian standpoint, for the work of the nation can be better performed where there is no friction in the home. It is better for the production and training of children to be citizens in the state. It is better for the furtherance and development of the higher qualities in the individual. To keep two people in perpetual bondage, who have discovered their mistake in marrying, is certainly not calculated to further these great objects. How long will a matter, so important to the state and individual, be the only one in which a lifelong penalty is attached to a single mistake, to the detriment of both?

It is the high idealist, who, in his dealings with women, is placed at the greatest disadvantage. It is the man of the world, with a large and varied experience, who can make the best choice in his own interests. Thus there is some truth in the saying that "A reformed rake makes the best husband." Yet the idealist must be given but his one chance, and, thereafter, if, on failure of the first essay, he ventures on another in the only way left open to him, social ostracism awaits him and her whom he has chosen. It is true that, under certain circumstances, he can claim a divorce; but, such is the state of the law that, to do this, one or the other party must be guilty of unfaithfulness, or cruelty, or both. Thus the law puts a premium upon the baser passions, and public opinion does the same, for, if the rake's marriage is a failure, he can console himself in the way he so well knows, and that the world will allow so long as he is content to treat his partner as a mistress and not as a wife. Can anything be more calculated, then, to depress, discourage and hamper the ideal than the state of the law and conventional opinion? Anyone, who is

not obsessed and blinded by the absolutism of moral dogma or the hard crust of convention, must allow that there is urgent need for some reform.

Doubtless what is required is reform, not revolution. It is quite possible to make divorce so easy that marriage, as an institution, becomes practically obsolete, and the evils of this are obvious.

Mankind advances through a series of actions and reactions. In the long run the movement is like that of the tide, a slow and orderly progress, but its most conspicuous feature are the forward bounds and regressions of its waves. The two tendencies are always present together simultaneously. At times they are in equipoise, but more often one or the other is dominant. At the present moment, in the matter under consideration, reaction is in the ascendant, because the evils of the opposite extreme are very patent. The laxity of the divorce laws in some American states has given the reactionaries an excuse which they have not been slow to use in maintaining an attitude blankly negative of all criticism or reform.

Far be it from the writer to adopt the common fallacy that the truth lies between two extremes. For between absolutism and complete license there can be no middle course. They tend, in fact, to the same goal. Both are destructive of the ideal, the one deliberately, the other under the plea of defending it. With the last it has nothing in common, and only seeks to be delivered from the trammels which the other would impose upon its free action and growth. Its real friends must endeavour to accomplish its deliverance. There is no question of destroying institutions, relaxation of morals, or concession to lower instincts, but of recognising outstanding facts with a view, not to make vice easier, but to give freer scope to high aims.

In order to qualify for divorce, the parties should have proved by many years of separation that there is no longer anything in common between them, and also by years of steady cohabitation that they have really found their ideal and intend to keep to it.

From this point of view the latest proposition put forward for a Parliamentary bill is worthy of support: that complete separation for a certain term of years should in itself constitute a sufficient qualification for dissolution of marriage. One of the most important factors in the case is the length of time required. The scandal created, and the handle given to reactionaries, by the relaxation of the marriage laws in some American states, was due mainly to the frequency with which divorces were granted to the same people in a comparatively short time, and not only to the trivial reasons for which they could be obtained. Hence parties were divorced and married again several times within a short period, sometimes to their former partners. It is obvious that such a state of things renders the institution nugatory, and must seriously complicate legal questions as to status and property. A long probationary period can alone ensure a stable choice. The law must not make it easy for mere caprice or fancy or baser feelings to seek their temporary satisfaction. Better than this would be the most rigorous conservatism, though it is to be feared that, in the long run, it would be equally destructive of the institution.

Three years, the time suggested in the bill recently outlined,¹ seems too short a time. A longer period should elapse, both as some kind of penalty for the first error, and to ensure that the next alliance shall be entered into with greater circumspection. And the knowledge that a probationary period of—say—ten years had to be faced, with its social disabilities, before freedom could be won in this way, would effectually hinder applications for divorce as the consequence of some temporary quarrel or misunderstanding, or the mere desire for change. Such a period would leave ample time for the legitimation of children born to the new union before they could feel the deprivation of social or legal status.

HENRY C. CORRANCE.

HOVE, SUSSEX.

¹ Since these words were written, the bill has been thrown out by the vote of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England in the House of Lords.